

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUJUMB 00592 151448 Z

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3839

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0592

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, BY

SUBJECT: REACTION OF PRESIDENT MICOMBERO TO PREVIOUSLY
REPORTED CONTACTS

REF BUJUMBURA 591

SUMMARY: BARAKANA CONFIRMS PRESIDENTIAL CHANNEL. MICOMBERO
VISITS LATOUR TO CONTINUE BROAD POLITICAL DISCUSSION
INCLUDING THOUGHTS ON USSR, PRC, LIBYA, AND CURRENT PROBLEMS
BURUNDI. END SUMMARY.

1. IN TELEPHONE CALL ON JUNE 14, FATHER BARAKANA SAID HE HAD
PASSED ALONG TO PRESIDENT GIST OF OUR CONVERSATION REPORTED
REFTEL AND THAT PRESIDENT HAD EXPRESSED APPRECIATION.
BARAKANA STATED MICOMBERO HAD SAID SOMETHING ABOUT WANTING TO
TALK WITH ME DIRECTLY, BUT HE HINTED THAT IMPLEMENTATION THIS
PRESIDENTIAL THOUGHT UNPREDICTABLE.

2. ALSO ON JUNE 14, UNDP RES REP LATOUR TOLD ME HE HAD
HAD AN UNEXPECTED VISIT FROM PRESIDENT, LATOUR'S HOME
PRECEDING EVENING. PRESIDENT ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY PASCAL
KASHIRAHOMWE, DIRECTOR BANQUE COMMERCIAL DU BURUNDI AND
MICOMBERO'S RELATIVE AND CONFIDANT.

3. LATOUR SAYS THAT MICOMBERO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AT
LENGTH AND WITH WARM WORDS FOR LATOUR'S COMMENTS REPORTED
PARA 6 REFTEL. MICOMBERO THEN LAUNCHED INTO DISCUSSION
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BUJUMB 00592 151448 Z

NUMBER OF TOPICS , OF WHICH LATOUR SAYS FOLLOWING WERE MOST INTERESTING;

A. RELATIONS WITH EASTERN COUNTRIES. MICOMBERO SPENT SOME TIME EMPHASIZING WHAT HE CONSIDERED TO BE DANGERS OF SOVIET PRESENCE NOT ONLY IN AFRICA BUT ALSO IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF EUROPE. HE SAID WHATEVER SOVIETS MAY PROFESS, THEY CONTINUE TO PRACTICE SUBVERSION WHEREVER THEY FIND AN OPPORTUNITY. ASKED ABOUT PRC, MICOMBERO SAID THAT HE THOUGHT CHINESE HAD ALSO BEEN DANGEROUS DURING PERIOD OF REVOLUTIONARY FAVOR, BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE NOW BUSY ENOUGH AT HOME THAT THEIR PRESENCE IN AFRICA WAS LESS TO BE FEARED THAN IT WAS AT THAT TIME. (LATOUR SAYS HE TRIED TO TELL MICOMBERO THAT HE THOUGHT THE LATTER HAD HIS PRIORITIES REVERSED, BUT DISCUSSION CAME TO NO CONCLUSION.)

B. RELATIONS WITH LIBYA AND OTHER COUNTRIES. DURING COURSE DISCUSSION, MICOMBERO SAID OF COURSE HE WAS GETTING ARMS FROM LIBYA, BUT WHAT DID THE WORLD EXPECT. HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO FIND SUPPORT ANYWHERE ELSE. BELGIANS CONTINUE TO FURNISH ARMS TO RWANDA, AND HE HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO GO WHERE THE ARMS WERE AVAILABLE. HE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT CAUSTIC ABOUT THE " LACK OF UNDERSTANDING" WHICH HE HAS RECEIVED " FROM OTHER POWERS".

C. CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES. REFERRING TO LATOUR' S PREVIOUS REMARKS ON THIS SUBJECT, MICOMBERO SAID AGAIN THAT HE WAS ONLY TOO WELL AWARE OF DIFFICULTY OF KEEPING CONTROL OVER DISJOINTED BURUNDI CIVILIAN AND MILITARY APPARATUS. HE SAID THIS WAS BASICALLY HIS REASON FOR FIRING PRIME MINISTER-- SO THAT HE HIMSELF COULD TAKE MORE CLOSELY IN HAND REINS OF GOVERNMENT. (COMMENT: FIRING APPEARS TO REMAIN POINT OF SOME SENSITIVITY. QUESTION OF DESIRABILITY THIS ACTION CAME UP DURING PREVIOUS LATOUR-MICOMBERO DISCUSSION (PARA 6 REFTEL) AND WAS ALSO RAISED WITH ME BY BARAKANA. UNSPOKEN FEELING SEEMS TO BE THAT FIRING WAS ON BALANCE A MISTAKE.)

D. PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT. MICOMBERO SAID THAT A STATEMENT ALONG LINES THAT SOME HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDING TO HIM (SEE REFTEL AND BUJUMBURA 546) HAS BEEN DRAFTED AND THAT HE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BUJUMB 00592 151448 Z

EXPECTED TO DELIVER IT ON JULY 1 (11 TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE). AT SAME TIME HE SAID THAT ALL BISHOPS OF BURUNDI, INCLUDING HUTU BISHOPS, HAD REACHED AGREEMENT ON TEXT OF PUBLIC STATEMENT WHICH WOULD APPARENTLY ALSO BE ALONG LINES OF SEEKING CALMING OF OPINION ON ALL SIDES.

E. EXPECTED INVASION. MICOMBERO SAID THAT HIS

INTELLIGENCE HAD REPORTED THE DATE OF THE NEXT INVASION ATTEMPT. MICOMBERO SAID HE WAS IN PROCESS OF OR PLANNING TO-- THIS WAS NOT CLEAR-- TAKE MATTER UP WITH OAU.

4. COMMENT: I HAVE REPORTED AT LENGTH IN THIS CABLE AND REFTEL ON RECENT, RATHER SURPRISING DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTACT WITH MICOMBERO BECAUSE OF THEIR POTENTIAL USEFULNESS IN ASSESSING PERSONALITIES AND VIEWPOINTS AFFECTING BURUNDI SITUATION. I PLAN MYSELF, UNLESS DEPARTMENT HAS OTHER COMMENTS, TO LOWER PROFILE AGAIN AND PUSH CONTACT NO FURTHER FOR MOMENT. THERE ARE TOO MANY FORCES AT WORK HERE WHICH TAKE A DIM VIEW OF " SUBVERSIVE" CONTACTS WITH FOREIGNERS, AND SITUATION WITHIN TUTSI GROUP IS TOO UNSTABLE TO BECOME OVERLY IDENTIFIED WITH ANY FACTION. CHANNEL WILL, BARRING MAJOR UPHEAVAL, REMAIN OPEN.

5. MICOMBERO HAS MADE IT A PRACTICE OVER THE YEARS TO DROP IN ON FOREIGN ACQUAINTANCES FOR GENERAL EXCHANGES OF VIEW. THESE HAVE PROBABLY NOT NORMALLY CUT AS CLOSE TO THE POLITICAL BONE AS HAVE RECENT CONVERSATIONS. STEPPED- UP INTEREST IN DIALOGUE MAY REFLECT MICOMBERO' S CONCERN ABOUT QUICKSAND IN WHICH TUTSIS MAY BE BECOMING INCREASINGLY ENTRAPPED. THAT HE AND EVERYONE ELSE REMAINS UPTIGHT, THERE SEEMS TO BE NO QUESTION. ONE SUSPECTS THAT HIS PROTESTATIONS OF LACK OF CONTROL MAY GO BEYOND WHAT SEEMS REASONABLE
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